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ABSTRACT

At certain points in their historical development, languages are not adequately equipped to serve their societies and do not offer certain communicative functions. Political and cultural domination can influence the language community to adopt a foreign language for higher communication, leaving the vernacular underdeveloped for those communication registers. Sudden changes in the communicative needs of the community may not give the vernacular a chance to adapt and develop necessary registers. The concept of language adaptation assumes that the speech community is capable of changing its language to meet new communicative needs, as German, English, Japanese, and others have. Language adaptation, usually a gradual and continuous process that goes almost unnoticed by the speech community, can occur by conscious intervention in a linguistic crisis. It can become a political goal involving cultural and linguistic values. The decisive factor in successful language adaptation is the determination of the speech communities rather than their languages' structural and lexical makeup. (MSE)

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Florian Coulmas

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LANGUAGE ADAPTATION

Florian Coulmas

Introduction

Introducing a new concept in a field of scientific inquiry is sometimes embarrassing because we could kick ourselves for not having thought of it sooner. **Language Adaptation** is one such concept.

It is not our purpose here to investigate the question of why it has taken so long to give consideration to a linguistic phenomenon that seems equally obvious and important for a better understanding of what speech communities do with their languages. Rather it is to discuss in some detail what the notion of language adaptation is all about and what its significance for a socio-historical understanding of language is.

Languages are often said to reflect the social realities of their speech communities. Serving as they do the particular communicative needs of individual speech communities, they must be able to deal with whatever needs to be dealt with in linguistic communication. Normally this is exactly what languages are: symbolic systems providing an adequate means of fulfilling all communicative functions relevant in a given community. One reason, or rather, one explanation of why languages differ is that speech communities differ with respect to the ways they use their language(s) and the communicative functions that languages fulfill.

Plausible as such a general statement may appear to everyone who favors a functionalist approach to the study of language, it is not easy to substantiate it in more specific terms. It is easy to say that a language is ideally suited to the communicative needs of its society, but it is quite difficult to show what exactly it is that makes it suitable. Therefore, the general claim that languages meet the communicative demands of their societies is hard to substantiate in a non-trivial way.

An alternative approach to the question of how suitable a language is for its speech community is to start at the other end, that is, to look at languages that in one way or another are not adequately equipped to serve their societies properly. Just as we can learn something about understanding where understanding breaks down or is inhibited, we can throw some light on the notion of the suitability of a language by looking at languages that are wanting and unable to fulfill all of its societies' communicative needs.

While this is not a very popular notion in modern linguistics, much can be said in favor of an approach that recognizes socio-functional differences between languages. Linguistic research in this century was shaped by the general positivist trend in the social sciences and by the value attributed to democracy by Western intellectuals. In conjunction with each other these tendencies generated an implicitly egalitarian perspective on the study of language: <u>All languages are equal</u>. In the beginning of this century, such a claim meant genuine progress in linguistics which was still in the grip of European ethnocentrism. Realizing that languages are, in principle, of equal complexity was,

however, a very abstract insight. Linguistic research of the last fifty years has proceded on the basis of this insight and has led to a remarkable understanding of the fundamental structural make-up of languages; but, because of the egalitarian perspective, much less has been done on the functions and functionality of languages in society. In this regard languages are clearly not equal.

It is an undeniable fact that social development and language change are not always well attuned. For a variety of reasons social development may sometimes proceed at a quicker pace than linguistic development, espeially when speech communities are subject to external influences, such as, war or colonization. As a result a situation arises where a language cannot satisfy in all respects the communicative needs of its speakers. Such a language is in need of adaptation. If it is not adapted to the new social conditions, it risks decay and eventually replacement by another language.

In the course of history, languages have been known to adapt successfully, thus recovering their full communicative potential after a period of retardation or degeneration. At present, a great number of languages, especially in Third World countries, are faced with demands to fulfill new functions that meet needs for educational, social, economic, scientific and technical development. They are not yet well-adapted and fit for the job.

While it is not surprising that a contemporary social phenomenon-the maladaptedness of vernacular languages in developing countries--has its predecessors in history, it remains to be seen in what respect language adaptation processes of the past are comparable with those of the

present. In order to study the mechanics of language adaptation, it will furthermore be necessary to supplement this historical question with the typological question of how different languages and their speech communities react when they come under pressure to adapt under comparable circumstances. Let us first consider a historical example.

An attempt at enlightened language adaptation: the German case

Three hundred years ago, the German language was badly in need of adaptation. After the reformation had stimulated the development and standardization of the vernacular varieties to a unified Hochdeutsch, the destruction of religious and political unity in the seventeenth century brought first standstill and then corruption and decay. The language fell into disrespect by those whose support and care it needed most, the intellectual and power elites who adjusted to the language and culture of their more highly developed neighbors. The situation became so critical that there were serious reasons to question the ability of German to survive as a medium of expression for more than the lowest and most ordinary functions. However, some concerned scholars and politicians realized the ever growing contrast between the boorish German and the cultivated languages of adjacent countries, French, Italian and Dutch in particular, but also Spanish and English. They also realized the political dimension of linguistic neglect and decay. Thanks to their attention and concern, the case of German language adaptation is well-documented.

The most prominent witness was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, one of the greatest scholars of his time. He was not a neutral bystander, however, but an active promotor of German language adaptation and cultivation. He was concerned about the fate of the German language, because he was convinced that the well-being of language and nation went hand in hand:

Einmal findet sich in allen Geschichten, daß gemeiniglich die Nation und die Sprache zugleich geblüht.[1]

The fact that Leibniz himself wrote about ninety percent of his works in French or Latin may seem ironic in the light of his pressing for the improvement and use of German. Yet, this very fact vividly illustrates the calamity. In order to reach his audience, that is, the intellectual elite, Leibniz had to publish in either French or Latin. Scientific or philosophical writing in German was almost unheard of in his time, and he was quite bitter about it:

Massen wenig rechtschaffene Bücher vorhanden, so in deutscher Sprache geschrieben und den rechten Schmack oder Saft haben. ... Wir schreiben gemeiniglich solche Bücher, darinnen nichts als zusammengestoppelte Abschriften aus anderen Sprachen genommen.[2]

Educated people did not care to write in German, and as a result the language developped a deficit in abstract terms which in turn made it ever more difficult to use it for expository writing.

Es ereignet sich aber einiger Abgang bei unserer Sprache in den Dingen, so man weder sehen noch fühlen, sondern allein durch Betrachtung erreichen kann: als bei Ausdrücken der Gemütsbewegungen, auch der Tugenden und Laster und vieler Beschaffenheiten, die zur Sittenlehre und Regierungskunst gehören; dann ferner bei den noch mehr abgezogenen

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[1] It is found in all history that usually nation and language bloom together (Leibniz 1683/1916: 19).

[2] There are few straightforward books written in the German language that have the right taste or savor. ... Usually we write books containing nothing but a hotchpotch of copies from other languages (Leibniz 1683/1916: 12).

und abgefeimten Erkenntnissen, so die Liebhaber der Weisheit in ihrer Denkkunst und in der allgemeinen Lehre von den Dingen unter dem Namen der Logik und Metaphysik auf die Bahn bringen.[3]

Leibniz' diagnosis of the weaknesses of German was very specific.While the language was well-adapted to the communicative needs of trades, such as, mining, hunting, navigation, etc., it could not function adequately in the higher domains of communication.

Am allermeisten aber ist unser Mangel, wie gedacht, bei den Wörtern zu spüren, die sich auf das Sittenwesen, die Leidenschaften des Gemüts, den gemeinlichen Wandel, die Regierungssachen und allerhand bürgerliche Lebens- und Staatsgeschäfte beziehen, wie man wohl befindet, wenn man etwas aus andern Sprachen in die unsrige übersetzen will.[4]

Leibniz was aware that the insufficiencies he couldn't fail to notice were not unalterable intrinsic traits of the German language. Every language, however poor it may be, can, after all express everything; but unless a language is cultivated or if it is neglected it may not lend itself so easily to the expression of complex thoughts (Leibniz 1697/1916: 41). The heart of the problem was, therefore, not to be found in the linguistic substance, but rather its speakers were to blame, many of whom had "forgotten their German without learning French properly" (Leibniz 1683/1916: 66). Leibniz' critical judgment is unambiguous. He

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[3] There is, however, a deficit in our language in those things that you cannot see of feel, but attain by contemplation only: such as expressions of emotion, virtue and vice, too, and other matters of morality and government; further those relating to more refined and polished insights that are brought into circulation under the names of logic and metaphysics by those who strive for wisdom in their art of thinking and the general doctrin of things (Leibniz 1697/1916: 27).

4 Just as one would have expected, we experience the worst insufficiency in words referring to morality, passion of the mind, social intercourse, governmental matters, and all sorts of affairs of civil and public life; as one cannot fail to notice when translating from other languages into our own (Leibniz 1697/1916: 29).

concludes that "the Germans do not lack the ability, but the resolution to elevate their language throughout" (1697/1916:27f.).

An appropriate attitude towards language adaptation is vital for its success. This insight was at the bottom of Leibniz' concern and the reason for his two pleas quoted here, "Admonition to the Germans" (1683) and "Of German language cultivation" (1697). He knew that the only chance of redirecting the unfortunate course of development on which the German language was set was to change the snobbish attitude of the intellectual and political elites whose preference for French was a means of dissociating themselves from the lower classes and defending their social privileges. As he could hardly argue that they would themselves profit directly from cultivating German, he had to convince them that it had to be done for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

Leibniz was not content with pointing out the shortcomings of the German language and pleading for its reform. He also proposed specific remedies. First of all, the language needed to be enriched. In order to be an elaborate means of higher forms of communication, the vocabulary had to be as volumnious and diverse as possible. In the 1697 article he suggested four steps toward that end:

[1]...Aufsuchung guter Wörter, die schon vorhanden, aber jetzt, weil sie wenig beobachtet werden, zu rechter Zeit nicht beifallen, [2] ferner durch Wiederbringung alter verlorener Worte, so von besonderer Güte; [3] auch durch Einbürgerung oder Naturalisierung fremder Benennungen, wo sie solches sonderlich verdienen, [4] und letztens, wo kein anderes Mittel, durch wohlbedächtliche Erfindung oder Zusammen setzung neuer Worte.[5]

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[5] ...[1] search of good words that already exist, but do not come to mind in time because they occur so rarely, [2] further, the recovery of old and forgotten words of special quality; [3] also nativization or naturalization of foreign names where they are deserving of it, [4] and finally, where

Enriching the vocabulary was important. However, upgrading the language was not confined to the lexicon. A normalized grammar was just as important:

Die Reinigkeit der Sprache, Rede und Schrift besteht darin, dass sowohl die Worte und Redensarten gut deutsch lauten als dass die Grammatik oder Sprachkunst gebührend beobachtet.[6]

A codified grammar was necessary because it would make the language a more precise and potent instrument and because it would enhance its status:

> Ob nun schon wir Deutschen uns also desto weniger zu verwundern oder auch zu schämen haben, das unsere Grammatik noch nicht in willkommenem Stande, so dünkt mich doch gleichwohl, sie sei noch allzuviel davon entfernt und habe daher eine grose Verbesserung nötig...Dies würde zu unserm Ruhm gereichen...und den von etlichen gefassten Wahn benehmen, als ob unsere Sprache der Regeln unfähig und aus dem Gebrauch fast allein erlernt werden müsste.[7]

A norm was deemed necessary for both linguistic and political reasons, but Leibniz' conception of how to arrive at a proper norm again proves great insightfulness in maters of language. While he explicitly states that rules must be there so that he who learns the language is provided with guidelines other than just usage, he nevertheless recognizes usage as the final authority and source of rules: "Usage is the master"

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other means fail, careful coinage or composition of new words (Leibniz 1697/1916: 42(square brackets added)).

[6] The purity of language, speech and writing consists in that both words and phrases have a proper German sound and that the grammar or art of language is seemly observed (ibid. 46).

[7] While we Germans thus need not be surprised or ashamed that our grammar is not yet in a welcome state, methinks it is still too far off the mark and, therefore, greatly in need of improvement. This would serve our glory and destroy the delusion entertained by many that our language is incapable of rules and has to be learnt almost entirely through usage (Leibniz 1697/1916:51).

(ibid. p. 52). His aims for adapting the German language were thus greater uniformity and exploitation of the avilable resources rather than adherence to rules for the rules' sake and narrowminded purism. Enrichment and normalization were the two points Leibniz stressed most. He was, however, by no means a bigot purist as many of his less enlightened followers. Rather, he acknowledged the necessity and positive effects of foreign loans.

> Es ist demnach die Meinung nicht, dass man in der Sprache zum Puritaner werde und mit einer abergläubischen Furcht ein fremdes aber bequemes Wort als eine Totsünde vermeide,dadurch aber sich selbst entkräfte und seiner Rede den Nachdruck nehme.[8]

As a matter of fact, he explicitly commended the introduction of educational and cultural achievements from Italy and France, emphasizing their beneficial influence on development. However, he was strictly opposed to uncritically copying the neighbors and adopting their language, because "taking over a foreign language normally has brought with it loss of freedom and a foreign yoke" (Leibniz 1697/1916:30). In his proposals Leibniz was eager, therefore, to strike a balance between purism, on the one hand, and alienation, on the other, recognizing, as he did, the multiplicity of resources a language can and should exploit for its development.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the German language was in a precarious state. The Thirty Year War had destroyed religious unity; the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations had disintegrated; there was a

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[8] I am, therefore, not of the opinion that one ought to become a puritan in language and, for superstitious fear, avoid a foreign but handy word as a mortal sin, thus debili tating oneself and depriving one's words of emphasis (Leibniz 1683/1916:29).

vacuum where other European nations had a capital defining standards of conduct, fashion, language, etc.; and finally, the elites were blinded by the glamor of the culturally more advanced neighbor and prone to despise their own heritage including their national language. Those were very unfavorable conditions, all of which Leibniz clearly recognized (1683/1916: 12). He was convinced, nevertheless, that the German language could be improved and adapted to the needs of all communicative functions. However, this was a major task, much to heavy for individuals to carry out. It needed political support and an institutional frame.

Therefore, Leibniz recommended the foundation of a society or academy whose members would occupy themselves with cultivating and guiding the German language, much like the Accademia della Crusca in Florence and the Academie Française in Paris did for Italian and French, respectively. No institution of similar authority ever came into existence in Germany, but in 1700 the Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften was founded with Leibniz as its spiritus rector. This body, however, never had anything like the impact of the French academy. Political disunity in Germany did not allow for a language academy to evolve that could claim nation wide recognition. So much more important was the role of the grammarians and lexicographers who devoted themselves to implementing Leibniz' ideas about language reform. Gottsched, Adelung, Campe, and later the brothers Grimm are only some important names. It can be argued that the German language would have adapted to the conditions of the changing world, to urbanization, industrialization and the general elevation of knowledge in the wake of compulsory education anyway. To some extent this is undoubtedly true. However, there is no denying that

the process of adaptation was influenced by "the language makers" (Harris 1980). Most of them must have known Leibniz' appeals; in some cases it is evident.* Their attention to what he said was, however, selective. It seems that he was best understood where he argued against the pervasive contamination of German and least where he advocated tolerance towards foreign investiture.

What needs to be stressed here again is that conscious intervention in the "natural" course of language development is not a new phenomenon typical of the now underdeveloped postcolonial countries. Language adaptation is a necessary condition for the survival of a language in a speech community affected by rapid social, economical and technological changes. To whom this sounds Darwinian, may very well accept it as a challenge to come up with a theory that explains the conditions of "the survival of the fittest" in the realm of languages.

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* Gottsched, for instance, rephrased Leibniz' above (cf. note 7) quoted passage in the preface to his Deutsche Sprachkunst when he says, "here we have to join forces, ... to free them from the prejudice that our language couldn't possibly be subjected to rules" (1748/1978: 13).

Admonition to the Indians

If Leibniz were to act as a language consultant to the government of India today he would very likely say about Hindi pretty much the same he said about German three hundred years ago: It needs to be adapted, and it can be adapted. In spite of the fundamental and obvious differences between the language situations in 17th century Germany and present-day India, there are some interesting parallels highlighted by our interest in language adaptation.

Consider for instance Gandhi's views on language problems in India. If "English" is replaced by "French," "Hindustani" by "German" and "Latin" by "Sanskrit," his words sound like a repetition of Leibniz' "Admonition to the Germans." He condemmed the fact that the elites succumbed to the foreign influence and accepted their cultural and linguistic domination.

> "In slavery, the slave has to ape the manners and ways of the master, e. g., dress, language, etc. Gradually, he develops a liking for it to the exclusion of everything else" (Gandhi 1965: 101).

Just like Leibniz, he recognized the attitude of the educated classes as the main obstacle for the elevation of Hindustani rather than intrinsic properties of the language:

> "If the English-educated neglect, as they have done and even now continue, as some do, to be ignorant of their mother tongue, linguistic starvation will abide" (ibid.: 96).

And just like Leibniz, Gandhi regarded the neglect of the native heritage as a national disgrace, "a loss to the nation" (ibid.: 19). His criticism of the role of English in India is more than a little reminiscent of what Leibniz said about French in Germany:

> "We have impoverished our mother tongue because of our love for English. We demean ourselves by insulting our language" (ibid.: 2).

We even find in Gandhi´s appeals the same mixture of rational and emotional argumentation as in Leibniz´, and the same paradox of which he was painfully aware. Both Leibniz and Gandhi used the foreign elite language while promoting the use of those native languages that should assume the function of national languages.

> "I have no doubt in my mind that Hindustani...is the national language. But I have not yet been able to prove this in my own writing or speech" (ibid.: 98).

Like all intellectuals and figures of national prominence Gandhi felt that he could not dispense with English. Also, he had no intention of confusing the issues at hand and use his pro-Hindustani arguments as a lever to stimulate xenophobia and provincialism. But he was as proud as he was sagacious, foreseeing, as he did that a decline of the standards of English in India was an inevitable consequence of the end of British rule, and that it was therefore vitally important to adapt Hindi (and other native languages) to the functions of modern communication which they would have to fulfill.

At the time of independence neither Hindi nor any other Indian language was well-adapted to the needs of education, technology and management. To change this was a matter not only of national pride, but of economic necessity as well, and to bring about changes was urgent in order to avert further damage.

> "English should not be allowed to transgress its rightful place. It can never be our national language, nor the medium of our education. We have impoverished our languages by using it as such. We have imposed a great burden on our students.... This slavery to an alien language has kept our millions deprived of a great deal of necessary knowledge for many years" (ibid.: 131).

Just as the neglect of German by the intellectuals had been diagnosed by Leibniz as the major reason for its precarious state, Gandhi blames his

compatriots. He echos Leibniz' complaint, for instance, that no German Grammar written in German and for Germans was available when he says:

> "I have not yet seen a single complete grammar of the Hindi language. Such as exist are in English and have been written by foreigners" (ibid.: 17).

Not only was the language not standardized, it also lacked entire domains of vocabulary necessary for advanced communication because of the exclusive use of English for these functions.

> "There are no equivalents for scientific terms. The result has been disastrous. The masses remain cut off from the modern mind" (ibid.: 5).

Like Leibniz, Gandhi realized that language adaptation could only be brought about by making use of a variety of resources. And like Leibniz, he was more enlightened and less puristic than many of his successors. Coining new words on the basis of Sanskrit roots was not enough, foreign words, too, had to be accomodated in the language: "The introduction of new words into any language enriches it" (ibid.: 104). To guide the language adaptation process, Gandhi called for "language experts" a request that was later met by the establishment of various institutions, such as, the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore.[10] Most important, however, for the adaptation of Hindi and other vernacular languages was their active employment for all purposes of higher communication. The point at issue was to break the viscious circle of linguistic degeneration by neglect and reluctance to use the native languages because of their thus produced shortcomings. The weaknesses of

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[10] It would be extremely interesting to compare the language movements in India (cf., e. g., Anamalai 1979) with the German Sprachvereine.

the authochthonous languages were, in fact, the greatest strength of English.

> "The lure of English has not left us. And until it goes, our own languages will remain paupers. Would that the people's Governments everywhere do their work either in the national or provincial languages! But to attain this, they must have language experts and the public must be encouraged to write in their provincial or national language" (ibid.: 108).

Leibniz' goals for the cultivation and adaptation of German were not achieved over night, but eventually they were. Hindi is still in the process of adaptation and has to overcome certain weaknesses, such as, its lack of generally acceptable technical terms. Just how this should be achieved is a matter of considerable controversy (see below). There is no doubt, however, that the process continues and that its success is important for the nation as a whole. Nobody would predict that in the foreseeable future, English will be reduced to insignificance in India as French was in Germany, but Hindi will have to assume increasingly more functions of English, because "it is now clear that the declining use of English at all levels of education and administration is both inescapable and irreversible" (Di Bona 1970: viii).

The path of Hindi is thornier than that of German in the renaissance, because it faces not only English as a formidable adversary, but also the other native languages of India, notably those of Dravidian stock, all of whose speakers are not yet prepared to concede Hindi the privileged position that English used to occupy. Many more languages of equally respectable traditions are involved in India than were ever spoken in Germany, and therefore the adaptation process of Hindi and its promotion as <u>the</u> national language for all Indians are so much more complex than the case of German. Nevertheless, there are enough striking

parallels of the two situations to invite a systematic look at the essential components of language adaptation (see below).

The analogies between Leibniz' and Gandhi's arguments pointed out above are especially noteworthy because the contexts of language adaptation in Germany and India are not analogous if we look at them from the point of view of social development. The adaptation of German was the result of the re-organization of the power structure over several centuries. As such it was both a by-product of, and a stimulating factor for, the full-fledged development of capitalism, which went along with urbanization, industrialization, general education, and the spread of literacy. The emergence of nationalistic and democratic ideas in the wake of the Enlightenment[11] also contributed to the idea of a single linguistic standard which could become the language of all members of a nation. These ideas had time to grow, so that the work of grammarians and lexicographers could be absorbed by the society.

In India, on the other hand, the promotion of Hindi was first and foremost tied to the idealism that pervaded the anticolonialist struggle. Once independence was achieved, the highest expectations were placed in Hindi and its role for creating a modern and democratic society. However, so far these expectations could be met only partly at best, which, given the short period of time, is not surprising. This makes the situation more difficult, because advances in science, technology and other domains of modern life are rapid and do not wait for Hindi to catch up.

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[11] Cf. Coulmas 1985, chapter 2 for a more detailed account of language and nationalism.

An additional complication is the fact that those who consider themselves guardians of the development of Hindi (and other major Indian languages) are deeply divided amongst themselves. Gandhi fostered the idea that what he called "Hindustani," that is, a popular variety of Hindi/Urdu which developed rather naturally starting in army barracks and bazaars where people from different regions and of different social backgrounds had to interact,could serve to bridge the gaps between regions and social strata so characteristic of Indian society. As a result of centuries of foreign rule, Hindustani contains many words of Persian, English, and other origins.

This fact as well as its popular character as "a language used by people of different social and regional background seems to have worked against its candidacy for official status" (Southworth 1985: 233). Instead those "language experts" prevailed who advocate purism and Sanskritization, that is, the substitution of many common loan words by Sanskrit-derived words. The result is much at variance with Gandhi´s intentions, namely the language becomes "less accessible to those who have no formal education" Southworth (1985: 230). Many progressive language planners, educationalists and politicians are frustrated with the official policy of promoting high standard Hindi which is so much more unlikely to become a popular language of a modern state. "Most standardisation devices in Indian languages today serve only to extend the ´tradition-inspired´ value system of small urban elites" (Khubchandani 1981: 27). It seems that Hindustani-adherents are fighting a loosing battle. In any event, it is clear that the adaptation of Hindi has not yet come to a final conclusion. While consciously relying on Sanskrit as a resource of

vocabulary expansion can be said to be systematically consistent and preferable for nationalistic reasons, inasmuch as foreign infiltration is held in check, the alienation of the language from the masses brought about by Sanskritization also has to be reckoned with.

The conservative policy of Sanskritization is a very controversial issue for the adaptation of Hindi as well as the other major languages of India, including those of Dravidian stock. And it will be interesting to observe the success of those who favor it. More generally, it can be said that a controversy between "popularists" and "traditionalists" is characteristic of all language adaptation processes. If they were determined by enlightened spirits, such as, Leibniz and Gandhi, a middle of the road-course would be followed. However, language adaptation would hardly be so sensitive a matter if rational reasoning was all that was needed to bring about a practicable solution.

The role of writing

The transition from orality to literacy is an important historical event for every society. Recent work of scholars, such as, Ferguson (1971), Goody (1968, 1983), Graff (1979), Heath (1980) has enhanced our knowledge of the history of literacy, its role for modernization, the control of bureaucratic institutions, industrialization, and the building of nationhood. In Linguistics it has become abundantly clear that writing is not just visible speech, but rather a mode of verbal communication in its own right. Without writing modern societies cannot function. While it has become clear that (a) literacy is not the same as

a standard language and (b) literacy does not necessarily bring about or even stimulate modernization, it is safe to say that complex forms of societal organization require writing and a written language.

There is no justification for the assumption, however, that this language has to be the vernacular of the masses. Rather, a great many cases throughout history demonstrate that this was not the case. It was very common, indeed, that, for a variety of reasons, the written language of a community was not the same as that of the common people.

When in the sixth century B. C. Darius, king of the then illiterate Persians, subjected peoples from the Nile to the Indus to the central administration of his empire, he adopted Aramaic, a foreign language, for the purposes of written communication, using scribes and translators (cf. Haas 1982: 32). On the other hand, Cuius regio, eius lingua (cf. Coulmas 1985: chpt. V), that is, the imposition of the language of the conqueror on the conquered, as, e. g., the spread of Greek through Asia in the wake of Alexander's military expeditions (cf. Harris 1980: 118f.), was a venerable principle throughout the ages.

In other cases, oral societies borrowed the written language, rather than the script only, from their more advanced neighbours. For example, the Koreans, Vietnamese and Japanese all used the Chinese written language before adapting the Chinese script to their own languages and vice versa. When they finally began to write Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese, they wrote a highly artificial language that had very little to do with the language of the people and which was nobody's mother tongue. Kanbun, the earliest form of written Japanese, for instance, is described as "a language quite unlike Japanese which few of the writers

could actually speak" (Sato Habein 1984: 8). This tradition began at about 600 A. D. and continued for many centuries. The story of Korean and Vietnamese reads very much alike.

Yet another kind of relation between writing and vernacular language can be seen where the written language was cultivated by a small kaste of scribes and not allowed to change in the direction of the language of the people whose speech, on the other hand, was not influenced by writing as they were largely illiterate. Restricted literacy of this kind may lead to either linguistic divergence and subsequent emergence of new languages, or to a situation which, since Ferguson's seminal article of 1959, is generally known as "diglossia." Thus, when the gap between written Latin and the vernacular varieties spoken throughout the Western half of the Roman empire became too great, the Romance languages evolved, a process which became irreversible once these varieties had begun to acquire a written form and were no longer regarded as corrupted spoken versions of the pure language, Latin.

Just this, on the other hand, is the state of affairs of languages, such as Arabic, Tamil, or Sinhalese which exist in diglossia. Their speech communities had developed a literary tradition in connection with great cultural achievements of religious and/or artistic nature and subsequently not allowed the written language to deviate from the ideal to adjust to the changes of the spoken language. The result was an unbridgeable rift between spoken and written language which did not lead to linguistic divergence only because the (for the most part illiterate) people continued to regard the written variety as the 'real' and correct manifestation of their language (cf. De Silva 1976).

As these examples may illustrate, the written language more often than not was not the same as the vernacular. In some cases this is more obvious than in others, especially where the written language is actually a different language and not only a different variety. In the latter sense, there is of course always a difference between spoken and written language, if only because speech and writing are different modes of expression and serve different communicative functions.

What concerns us here is that writing, while potentially introducing diglossia into every speech community,[12] is always instrumental in language adaptation. That writing does not just duplicate speech is by now a common place.[13] It changes the nature of verbal communication as well as the speakers' attitude to, and awareness of, their language. Writing makes a society language conscious; it is a "more advanced and specialized form of adaptive behaviour than speech" (Harris 1980: 13). Goody (1977) calls written language "decontextualized" and stresses its importance for a discontinuous organization of the perceptual world. The entire meta-linguistic terminology--parts of speech, sentences, meanings, words, morphemes, phonemes, etc.--is a product of the "language experts," the grammarians whose raw material is language in written form. The dictionary, this important institution of the Western tradi-

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[12] Notice, for instance, what Pawley (1984: 36) remarks about English: "Printed texts in English are normally in a dialect that departs more or less from the vernacular; this is particularly true of texts used at secondary school level. Children thus have the job of learning to read and write in a partly-new language."

[13] Cf. e. g. Coulmas 1981, Coulmas, Ehlich 1983, Vachek 1973, Tannen 1982. For reviews of the recent literature see also Akinnaso 1982 , Slaughter 1985.

tion, is perhaps the most obvious example of how writing allows us to take a discontinuous view at language and organize its parts in whichever way we see fit.

Writing thus makes it possible to create or codify a standard which becomes independent of an individual or a group of speakers. Gottsched, the most prominent of German grammarians of the 18th century engaged in adapting the German language, explicitly acknowledges its importance in this respect. He had no doubts about the historical priority of speech, but emphasizing, as he did, cultivated rather than natural language, he conceded written language the role of the model with which spoken language should conform.

Alle Sprachen der Welt...sind vor der Erfindung der Buchstaben sehr rauh und unförmig gewesen. Ihre erste ordentliche Gestalt haben sie der Schrift zu danken gehabt.[14]

This attitude has been branded as the"tyranny of writing" by de Saussure, because he failed to appreciate the fact that "the emergence of homo scribens makes a radical and henceforward irreversible difference to what a language is" (Harris 1980: 14). In the present context this difference is particularly important as it implies, among other tings, the possibility of depersonalized and consciously designed strategies for language adaptation: the catalogueing of grammatical rules, the compilation of word lists, and the dissemination of such reference works throughout the speech community in the interest of establishing a unifying norm. Homo scribens created a world with an education that requires teachers, schools curricula, textbooks, methods,

[14] "Before the invention of letters, all languages of the world were rugged and unshapely. Their first proper form they owe to writing" (Gottsched 1748, III#22).

mother tongue instruction, and the like, a world, in other words, in which the systematic advancement of knowledge is cultivated, verbalized and recorded. Furthermore, he created a symbol of identity, a powerful means of defining groups across social strata. Writing provides a previously low status language with prestige and thus furnishes a major attitudinal precondition for adaptation attempts to succeed. However, it also is an essential technical precondition inasmuch as it makes possible the systematic organization of word lists and thereby the differentiation and enlargenment of vocabulary,[15] as well as the fixation of an authoritative grammar for schooling an deliberate language spread.

Writing thus plays a very intricate role for language adaptation. On the one hand, it introduces novel stylistic varieties and the possibility of freezing a given linguistic state, which, in a speech community with low literacy, will lead to diglossia whose low variety will then, at some point, make adaptation necessary; on the other hand, it provides the attitudinal and technical prerequisites that make it possible. At least for the purposes of modern communication in our times, there can be no language adaptation without writing.

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[15] The early development of Castilian is a good example. Its adaptation for national purposes was fostered by King Alfonso X, 1252 to 1284. "These three decades marked a renaissance in science and letters around the court. A lexicographer himself, the king selected or adapted Castilian words to replace Latin or Arabic technical terms. A growing number of writers--particularly Jews who preferred the spoken language rather than "Catholic" Latin--used Castilian in their translations and original works; this effort made possible its use in government documents" (Weinstein 1979: 347).

Natural versus artificial

Written language was once called "an unnatural substitute for the spoken word" by Jespersen (1933: 670). While we would call it an extension or supplement of speech rather than a substitute, we can accept Jespersen's qualification of "unnatural." As opposed to speech, writing is unnatural in the sense that languages do not develop a written norm without conscious effort. Writing itself is an artefact, and as such it is the main agent of introducing artificial elements into the so-called natural languages. The notion of "artificial language" is most readily associated with computer software, but actually very much is artificial in natural language [16] which is, after all, in keeping with the fact that culture is part of human nature.

To distinguish the natural from the artificial in human languages is not easy, but clearly there are tendencies of linguistic development that are more artificial than others. Many languages have been influenced, by puristic attitudes. Reformers who, usually under the impact of nationalistic ideology, were concerned about the purity of their language, set themselves the task of purifying the language infested by foreign loans. In some cases such efforts are just part of the national culture with a long tradition, as in France where guarding the language

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[16] Cf. Paul's remark on the natural and the artificial in language: "In addition to his natural language which, up to that point, he has used exclusively, an individual learns an artificial language closer to the [written] norm. In the modern countries this is brought about, for the most part, through school instruction whereby one learns the written language in the strict sense as well as a vernacular which is approximating the written language" (Paul 1886: 415).

against foreign influence is part of the routine of the acadamy. In other cases they are tied to a unique political event, such as, the conception and adoption of the archaising katharevousa as the "pure" and formal variety of Greek at the beginning of the 19th century in conjunction with the then flurishing nationalism and the liberation from Turkish rule. The katharevousa is a prime example of deliberately introduced artificial features into a language.[17]

Innovation in language is necessary because there is a constant need to name novel objects, processes and relations. When a speaker wants to express a concept for which there is no word in his language but in another language he knows, he can either borrow that word or coin a new one with its meaning, he can, in other words, borrow the form and the meaning or the meaning only.[18] As the major means of vocabulary expansion both these borrowing strategies are very important in the context of language adaptation. A comparison of lists of chemical elements reveals the preference of different strategies in different languages as well as a curious mixture of words of different origins.

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[17] Cf. Browning's (1969: 107) very harsh judgment on the Greek nationalists' attempt at purifying their language: "The kathare vousa was created in the second quarter of the nineteenth century by progressive 'purification' of the new demotic, and introduction of more and more elements from the learned tongue.

> It is always macaronic in character, mingling together incongruously old and new, and studded with false archaisms, hyper correct forms, and mere blunders."

[18] Cf. Haugen (1950) for an insightful comparison of kinds of linguistic borrowing.

Greek	Italian	English	German	Japanese	Chinese
μάλαμα	oro	gold	Gold	kin (金)①	jīn (金)⑧
ὀξυγόνον	ossigeno	oxygen	Sauerstoff	sanso (酸素)③	yǎng (氧)⑨
ουράνιον	uranio	uranium	Uran	uran (ウラン)⑤	yóu (铀)⑥
σαμάριον	samario	samarium	Sam arium	samarium (サマリウム)⑦	shān (钐)⑦

Just comparing the names of the above four elements across these six languages is very telling. The more recent the discovery, the more uniform the names. For elements, such as, gold that happen to exist in pure form in nature, one can expect to find old national words in practically all languages. For elements, such as, hydrogen and oxygen that are associated with chemical substances or reactions readily perceivable in, and of overt importance for, everyday life, some languages have terms composed of native morphological material, such as German Sauerstoff and its Japanese translation sanso. Further, terms for elements that have no connection with everyday life are very similar for most languages, except for minor morphological adjustments and formal differences betraying the immediate source or model language, e. g., German in the case of Japanese uran. In Chinese, however, the nativization is complete. While the phonetic shape of the word is supposed to approximate that of the first syllable of English uranium, the number of syllables is reduced to fit the mono-syllabic pattern of all Chinese terms for chemical elements. The script, moreover, makes the

word indistinguishable from naturally developed forms. Finally, the terms for the last element is treated like a proper name in all languages. There is no composite meaning that could be translated, that is, rendered in a different form in a different language. Again Chinese is the apparent exception, but shan is really a truncated form of Samarium. The above mentioned word sanso illustrates a very common process in Japanese involving three different languages: It is a Japanese loan translation coined on a German model making use of Chinese roots, san and so being the Sino-Japanese readings of 酸, 'acid,' and 素, 'simple,' respectively. Again, the foreign origin of the term is obscured by the writing system which in both Chinese and Japanese plays an important role in word formation determining adaptation strategies.

Interestingly, scientific terms have frequently been re-imported into Chinese from Japanese. The Japanese word for 'telephone,' denwa (電話) may illustrate. The two characters literally mean 'electric speech' and are as such understandable to Chinese, too. In Chinese they are read diànhuà (电话). This word has replaced the earlier, more cumbersome term 德律风, délǜfēng, which was coined to imitate the sound shape of telephone. The phonetic shape of reimported character compound words in Chinese is different from Japanese, but in writing the words are the same in both languages. Which is to show that the role of Chinese characters in East Asia is similar to that of Greek and Latin roots for terminology formation in European languages. Among 62 physical terms, Miyajima (1981) reports, 26 have the same written form in Chinese and Japanese while 22 are similar in a way comparable with the similarity of French and English technical terms. The written language, this entirely

artificial stratum of linguistic expression, thus constitutes a link and a multifunctional resource for terminology formation. For Chinese and for Japanese, too, this artefact has become the language's second nature through which borrowing and vocabulary innovation is filtered.

Under such circumstances of intense mutual contact, borrowing is a multi-layer process making use of elements that are frequently recycled.[19]

The direction of borrowing is variable. For many centuries Japanese has relied on Chinese loans for adapting to the communicative needs of more refined culture. Since modern times, however, it has begun repaying its debts, increasingly so since Japan's technological lead over China and the rest of Asia has consolidated.[20] Through the medium of Chinese charcters Japan has become an exporter of technical terms. On the other hand, it has turned away from Chinese as a source absorbing instead an enormous influx of English loans. Again, this shift is not exceptional, but rather typical for language adaptation processes.

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[19] A similar situation is found in modern Greek. Scientific terminology consists to a large extent of compounds formed from Greek elements in a language other than Greek, such as, French or English. From there they were (re-)imported into modern Greek (cf. also Ehlich, Braun in this volume).

[20] Cf. Kindaichi (1957: 164f.): "There are [in Japanese] two kinds of Chinese character words dealing with abstract expressions: (1) those borrowed from China, and (2) those coined in Japan as translations of Western words imported during the introduction of Western culture during the early years of the Meiji period....Thus scientific essays can be written in Japanese thanks to the existence of such words; and in this regard Japanese is a civilized language, qualitatively different from the languages of primitive people" [my transl.]. While nowadays we would take exception to the qualification of languages as primitive, it is clear that Kindaichi put his finger on an important point distinguishing Japanese from many non-Western languages.

In Old English times, to cite another example, it was the fashion to form native words for new notions, e. g., of Christianity. Later, in the early Renaissance, the preference shifted to borrowing from French and using material from the classical languages (cf. Jespersen 1933: 667).

That languages, or rather, speech communities at various historical periods should turn from one adaptation strategy and one preferred source of innovation to another is usually a reflection of social and political changes. Such strategy shifts are evolutionary answers to problems coming into existence through rapid changes in the socio-economic and politico-cultural habitat of a speech community. To some extent they are conscious, and thus there are guided as well as unguided phases or aspects of language adaptation.

Natural, unconscious development has sometimes led to a great similarity of forms which it is important to distinguish. Then conscious intervention may be desirable. Jespersen (1933: 666) cites an order of 1844 to use port instead of larboard because of the latters similarity with starboard.

Notice, however, that adaptation processes are not restricted to vocabulary supplementation; grammatical changes may also be involved. Yanabu (1979: 14ff.), for instance, observes that pre-modern Japanese texts did not usually consist of an array of complete sentences with subjects and predicates exhibiting a finite verb form at the end; rather, loose concatenations of clauses were much more common [21]:

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[21] "The Japanese felt uneasy about a sentence coming to a definite conclusion, rather admiring sentences that looked as if they would end but went on for several pages" (Kindaichi 1957: 173; my transl.).

Phrases merged into each other connected by parts of speech that would have one grammatical function in the first and another in the second.

The finite sentence as the basic unit of text, Yanabu contends, is really a result of the enormous amount of translations of Western books accompanying the opening of Japan to the West in the 19th century. In a sense, then, Japanese has been influenced consciously and artificially in the Meiji-period mainly by those intellectuals who devoted themselves to the difficult task of translating philosophical, scientific and literary books from Western languages. As the modernization of Japan was so sudden and drastic, its linguistic repercussions are particularly obvious and promising for more in-depth research on language adaptation.

What the Japanese example highlights is the important role of translation, and hence of the bilingual individual, for language adaptation. Translating, of course, presupposes a very conscious attitude towards language and sometimes requires conscious stretching of grammatical rules. It is also very revealing as to the limitations of a given language relative to the expressive power of another. A very interesting example is that of John Dryden. This man of letters who called his language "uncultivated and unpolished" and as late as 1693 complained that no tolerable dictionary or grammar of it was available, in his "Dedication to Troilus and Cressida" reports how he relied on translation for clarity:

> "I am often put to a stand, in considering whether what I write be the idiom of the tongue, or false grammar, and nonsense couched beneath the specious name of Anglicism; and have no other way to clear my doubts, but by translating my English into Latin, and thereby trying what sense the words will bear in a more stable language" (cited in Bolton 1972: 44, emphasis added).

Dryden's mildly perplexing trick of translating sentences of his mother tongue into Latin and then putting them back into English in order to understand their true structure and meaning clearly reflects a belief (a) in universal grammar and (b) the fact that it is incorporated in Latin rather than English. This belief that grew out of the general European esteem for the (written) classical languages in medieval and early Renaissance times brought into the Western grammatical tradition a number of concepts that could hardly have been derived from the study of European vernacular languages alone. More significantly, it is not a farfetched assumption that the practice of matching English against the "more stable" model of Latin should have influenced its development. For one thing, the Latin standards of clarity and precision were imposed on English, and one obvious way of doing justice to them was to depart as little as possible from the grammar of the Latin text to be translated. Also, in the Renaissance Latin and Greek were still held in high esteem and many writers continued to write Latin. Milton started his career as a Latin poet, and he continued to write in Latin until he was almost fifty. It seems most likely that both conscious and unconscious interferences from Latin influenced the grammar of written English.

The explicit Renaissance debate about English and its adequacy for literary purposes is a reflection of the intellectuals' dependence on the scafold of Latin grammar. Throughout the Old and Middle periods English had developed quite naturally. In particular, the enormous absorption of French vocabulary since the Norman conquest happened without conscious attention or guidance. Significantly, English was hardly used in writing then for several centuries, as government was

conducted in French and learning in Latin. When in the Renaissance the desire grew to elevate the status of English vis-a-vis French and Latin, it was often felt wanting and its appropriateness as a literary language was in doubt. It is not surprising, therefore, that from that time on many learned men raised their voice calling for a conscious regulation of English. It was discovered, for instance, that most writers of English were in the habit of placing prepositions at the ends of sentences - a practice that was clearly at variance with both Latin authors and the etymology of the word preposition. Dryden therefore established the rule that terminal prepositions should be avoided at all cost, a prescription that survives to the present day as the kind of linguistic pedantry, up with which, Churchill said, he would not put. Many other artificial features have entered the language in that period. It was the spirit of the time that the English language was defficient in many respects and needed guidance. Samuel Johnson, the great lexicographer, understood his task as weeding out the most outrageous improprieties of the language:

> "Every language has its anomalies, which though inconvenient, and in themselves once unnecessary, must be tolerated among the imperfections of human beings, and which require only to be registered, that they may not be increased, and ascertained, that they may not be confounded; but every language has likewise its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe" (Johnson 1747/1963: 4).

It was in the Renaissance with the spread of literacy that dictionaries and grammars acquired an authority almost like the Ten Commandments. By providing the insignia of upgrading the prestige of the vernacular languages and bringing them out from under the shaddow of Latin, they

became institutions in their own right whose task it was to ascertain the language, to free it from impurities, and to stabilize it.

Again the English example illustrates a rather general phenomenon. The need or desire to use a language in writing produces an awareness of its shortcomings relative to a standard defined by the usage of another, more advanced language. Writing, in turn, produces the remedies by stimulating the production of reference works whose authority is reinforced by the need to compete with the prestige of the model language. That way the course of development of a language is sometimes influenced in an artificial way.

Conclusions

In this inquiry we have tried to show that languages at certain points of their historical development are found wanting by members of their own speech communities, and that with respect to certain communicative functions they are wanting. The reasons for such a state of affairs can be many; typically external socio-economic influences on a given speech community are highly relevant. Political domination or, actual or alleged, cultural superiority of neighbours, invadors or colonizers may affect the language loyalty of the trend setters of linguistic conduct, the learned and affluent, in such a way that they adopt a foreign language for purposes of higher communication. As a result, certain registers of higher communication remain underdeveloped, because the vernacular language is never used for the respective purposes. This being so, a language acquires a reputation of being inadequate.

Another reason for a language's inadequacy may be that communicative functions are introduced into a speech community very suddenly through external contact so that the language could not adjust gradually and develop the registers appropriate for these novel tasks.

That languages are not adequately equipped to fulfill the communicative needs of their speech communities is an abnormal state of affairs, however, a review of language histories reveals that it is not all that uncommon. If a speech community fails to react to such a state of affairs, its language may degenerate and eventually disappear. But if it does react the language may very well adapt and regain full communicative adequacy. The measures that can be taken to achieve this goal have here been subsumed under the concept of language adaptation, a notion which may help to appreciate the fact that the relative inadequacy of languages is not a modern phenomenon typical of developing countries whose languages are nowadays in need of adaptation. A careful look at languages, such as German, English, Japanese, and others which are now fully adapted to the needs of modern communication in science, technology, and management reveals that, not too long ago, they too were felt to be deficient relative to the ideals of more highly developed languages. Yet, they were successfully adapted to the demands of modern communication.

Language adaptation is, for the most part, a gradual and continous process that takes place almost unnoticed by the speech community. In times of linguistic crisis, however, conscious intervention may be called for. Language adaptation then becomes a political goal whose substance exhibits remarable similarities across languages and histor-

ical epochs. The values in question can be summarized as uniformity, precision, elegance, purity of form, allegiance to literary tradition, and elaboration through coinage of new terms. For achieving these goals, writing is always instrumental, and so are institutions typical of literate societies: depersonalized standards, reference works, and schools.

The well-adaptedness of a language is not necessarily a permanent state of affairs, and neither is mal-adaptedness. Just as a language may be a donor language in one period and a borrower in another, its relative adaptedness is a matter of potential change. While nowadays with English hailed as the first really universal language, the chances of adapting the languages of post-colonial societies to the needs of modern communication are often seen to be rather poor, one should not forget that the prestige of Latin was a formidable obstacle for the adaptation of all modern European languages. The decicive factor of successful language adaptations has always been the determination of the speech communities rather that the structural and lexical make-up of their languages.

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